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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the personal experiences of a Fulbright scholar working in the Egyptian government's Cairo broadcast facility, offering an inside understanding of some of the broadcasting procedures used by Egyptian mass media. Besides descriptions of the broadcasting procedures at Cairo Radio, the paper contains notes on announcers' training sessions that the author both attended and directed; anecdotes about pronunciation difficulties, the use of American versus British dialect and speaking voice, and on-the-air broadcasting operations/experiences; general information about Cairo Radio, such as its organization, types of programing, and physical plant; and differences between American and Egyptian broadcasting procedures. (RL)

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WORKING FOR CAIRO RADIO

BY

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Speech Communication Association Of America,

Annual Convention, New York, 1980

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WORKING FOR CAIRO RADIO

With me in Cairo it was the old story; if you don't know that something can't be done you can go ahead and do it. I was told later that I accomplished in a few weeks what it took others at least a year to achieve: I obtained broadcast performance credentials. This was only a short while after having obtained basic press credentials which would allow me into the building. But, I hasten to let the world know that I did not do all of this myself. Through the persistence of one of my students in Cairo--who had a influencial father and relatives--I soon met an under-secretary of the ministry of telecommunications. It was he, the under-secretary who, after a couple of meetings with me and listening to my voice on tape, issued the directives which led to my going on the air in record time. An American lady from San Francisco who has been working for Cairo Radio for some eight years told me that ordinarily it would have taken a year for me to have cleared to go on the air.

One's credentials--which included a photograph--always had to be shown upon entering the front-lobby to several security guards in civilian clothes. This was after walking up the steps past a sandbagged emplacement on the sidewalk in front of the main entrance which had soldiers armed with unsheathed bayonets on guard around the clock. (Other sandbagged emplacements with soldiers were outside on either side of the building and inside, one in a corner under a stairwell in the front lobby and one on the second-floor landing

at the open railing in back of the main lobby.) The "stars" of Cairo radio and television did not have to bother taking out their passes, I noticed. While I eventually established friendly relations with many of the guards, I never reached "star" status where I did not have to show my credentials. I did notice, however, that as soon as I switched from my white-colored press credentials to the green performer's card that the guards were immediately more cordial.

I always felt safe when I went into the broadcast building on the Cornishe El Nil during the day. There seemed to be a constant stream of people going in and out of the building from sunrise to sunset. But, a couple of times in the middle of the night when I was waiting in a second-floor performers' lounge to go on the air, I felt less safe. That seemed to be a good time for anyone attempting a coup or outright attack.

Besides being on the air with some of Radio Cairo's English language programs and working with some friendly and talented Egyptians, I liked sitting in a performers' lounge (there are several in various locations for radio and television) and meeting expatriots like myself who were often broadcasting to their native countries. There was Mohamed Ali Abdul Karim from Bangladesh who spoke English in a limited way but whith whom I had frequent conversations. We met one day at noon in a radio lounge and he insisted on buying me something to drink--an Egyptian form of hospitality which meant that I seldom had to purchase my own drinks while in the broadcast building. Karim told me that for a few years he had been broadcasting to his people in Bangladesh and that he was pleased to meet an American with

whom he could use some of the English which he knew. A couple of days later Karim gave me a composition to correct. He had written it in English and had to submit it to a school in Great Britain where he wished to take a correspondance course in journalism.

And then there was Roberto from Brazil who was broadcasting on Radio Cairo's South American Service. When he and I met in the radio lounge it was he who initiated the conversation by saying: "You must be the American professor that everyone is talking about in the broadcast building!" I admitted to being a professor and an American (just what kind of combination that is in Cairo where everyone who has any sort of degree or professional status is called "Doctor" I am not certain). But I hastened to add that I might not be the person everyone was talking about. It turned out that Roberto lived with his wife and children a few blocks from us on the island of Zamalek (one of two major islands in the Nile just west of the heart of downtown Cairo--the island was established for many years as the Momartre of Montparnasse of El Kahira because of the western embassies, professionals and artists and the accompanying book stores, art cultural centers and expensive boutiques to meet such westerners' pocketbooks and life-styles). Roberto said that he had been working for Radio Cairo for a little over a year and disliked Cairo because it lacked the "intellectual and cultural" levels which he and his family were accustomed to.

On any one day or evening, I could sit in a radio lounge and meet and listen to an amalgam of different languages and peoples from around the world. There were Frenchmen, Germans, British, Italian

and always a variety of middle-easterners. It was at Radio Cairo where I felt that my education was lacking because I am not bi-lingual or tri-lingual as many people are who work in broadcasting in Egypt. But, I must say that working with Egyptians at Radio Cairo increased my Arabic word-level and my hearing of some of the more difficult sounds for my American ears to detect. One such example of the improvement of my pronunciation of Arabic was with the name of Boutros Boutros Ghali, minister of state and foreign affairs in Sadat's administration. I had been giving the last name a "G" sound until one of my partners on the air said, "You know, if you would prononunce his last name as if it were spelled R-A-L-L-Y, you would be closer to the Arabic pronunciation." Immediately after calling the minister "Rally" several Egyptians smiled at me in the offices and hallways and complimented me on my improvement in learning their language!

The day that my student-interpreter and I reported to the broadcast building and for the first time received permission to go upstairs I did not know that I, among about a dozen others of all ages who aspired to work for Cairo Radio, was scheduled for a traditional audition. Less than five minutes before my audition, I was handed a pre-printed one-page feature talk which I began to "woodshed" as time would permit. I was then ushered into a small production facility which contained an announce booth and sparsely furnished control room. After the first paragraph I was asked to stop reading. The door to the announce booth was opened by a gentleman whom I later learned is chief announcer for Arabic news broadcasts and with whom I developed a close professional relationship as time went by, Ibrahim Hassen.

Hassen asked me to read a story from the front page of my copy of the day's English language newspaper, the Egyptian Gazette. Again, I got only as far as the end of the first paragraph of a story and was stopped.

When I went into the control room and took a seat, one of the judges apologized for the necessity of my reading. "It is only a formality as far as you are concerned, you understand." Then I was asked my professional and academic background. I listed my broadcast experience for the past several years and finished with my academic degrees. Everyone smiled and some laughed outloud, among them, Mrs. Rita Shehata who said that I "embarrassed them" because I had far more education and training than any of the judges. I said: "No, no! I am still learning and this is a major reason for wanting to work for Cairo Radio!" From that point on, the audition moved to a political question-and-answer session for approximately thirty minutes. (This audition was taking place between the Camp David talks and the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. I do not wish to embarrass any of my Egyptian broadcast colleaques and friends, or myself, therefore I will not be specific as to questions and answers.) When I left, we had reached the point of discussing salary and time available for me to work at the broadcast building. I was already committed to a class in broadcast jounalism at the American University and writing my Fulbright lectures for the mass communications department at Cairo University. I was asked at the end of my audition if I would be willing to help train new announcers. I readily agreed to training with the qualification that I would use the voice develop-

ment approach that I do in my speech communication courses in the States, that is, General American dialect. Also, I let my new Egyptian colleagues know that I was still of the traditional persuasion that no matter what the language, on-the-air people should have better than average voices. It was also agreed that I would attend some new announcers' sessions in order to better understand overall procedures at Radio Cairo.

The training sessions began a week later with Abdel Halim El Bishlawy, a retired gentleman who had worked several years for Radio Cairo and before that the U.S. Embassy before diplomatic relations were broken between the United States and Egypt in the 1960's. Bishlawy was also instrumental in starting the Voice of America studios in Cairo. He speaks excellent English and advocates the British pronunciation--predominant at Radio Cairo. I began working immediately in a group of new announcers which consisted of Mrs. Ekbal Baraka, Mrs. Perry Safwat, Miss Cherien Lennie, Miss Rajia Nachat and Bishlawy. These ladies were housewives working at other jobs or students. Bishlawy relied on my pronuncation of American locations and names; e.g., on both television and radio Egyptian announcers were saying ("SEAR-US") Vance instead of ("SIGH-RUS") Vance. I noted within two or three weeks after having begun working at the broadcast building <u>all</u> announcers of radio and television news--regardless of the language--were pronouncing Vance's first name correctly!

During my work I obtained a multiplicity of corroboration that all of my on-the-air work was being recorded and/or otherwise monitored--even in the middle of the night. I felt that this was done for

various valid reasons, including playback for anyone who wished to take advantage of my pronunciation of American names and locations. However, in the main radio control room on the second-floor I was twice shown that all programs on all domestic and short-wave frequencies were recorded on seven-inch reel-to-reel recorders and saved for seven days. Basically, an engineer once told me through an interpreter that this was what the government wanted so that any controversy about who said or wrote something which went out over the air could be checked. At times, there were from 12 to 18 different programs going out simultaneously over the same number of frequencies from Radio Cairo.

For three weeks we scheduled training sessions erratically; we all worked at different jobs with different hours involved. When we did get together for two or three hours at a time in studio Twenty-Six--the training studio in which my audition had been held--we strived to use the time wisely. I attempted to always defer to Mr. Bishlawy because of his being my senior by many years and also because I soon learned that what he was advocating in radio broadcasting was basically a philosophy akin to my own. The following are from my notebooks of those three weeks.

"Do not read fast on short-wave. The slower the speed the more the voice is audible.

"The fidelity of the microphone is not one-hundred per cent.

"An announcer should use all his parts like an opera singer. This is the difference between ordinary reading and announcing.

"Most material used by Radio Cairo is pre-recorded with the

the exception of newscasts and some commentaries. Time-schedules are set up for announcers who work on shifts during the night to record programs during the day.

"Rate of speaking is very important for the announcer at Cairo Radio. After some consistent experience, know how many words you can read in one mirute. Before recording, this is helpful. Some engineers on some frequencies are ordered to follow the clock quite closely and are instructed to cut some programs off-the-air in order to go to another program on time. Cairo Radio announcers are advised not to rush. Count the words in the script. Then you can edit the "talk" before recording. Once you know your speed, then it is easy to assess a script.

"Always practice and mark your script before going into the recording studio. Engineers do not want their time wasted. Also, an announcer does not want to take up the next announcer's time scheduled for the same recording studio.

"While a 'talk' may undergo minor editing by an announcer, a newscast cannot be edited. Translators and censors are involved in writing all scripts and it is especially crucial that a newscast and/or commentary is to be read exactly as given to the announcer. This is a government matter.

"At Radio Cairo," Mr. Bishlawy told us, "we don't want to hear our announcers taking a breath in mid-sentence. If you get tired, stop and breathe and then continue reading! And certainly, take a breath between paragraphs.

"Make sure that you unpin your newscasts before you go on the air." (This is nothing new to us academically or professionally in broadcasting in the United States. But, all of the time that I worked for Cairo Radio I was handed news scripts with each story on half-pages of onion-skin paper. It took much experimentation on my part while on the air to prevent sounds from handling the onion-skin sheets. Television announcers also used these half-page onion-skin sheets on their newscasts. At no time did I ever see a radio or television script typed in the formats which we use in the United States.)

Mr. Bishlawy was a stickler for announcers marking their scripts. His was the traditional approach, as I know of it; "Drop traditional punctuation and use symbols in place of it--b ica[illegible] hash-marks and ellipses in place of periods, commas and semi-colons. Punctuation also varies from announcer-to-announcer. Punctuation is according to how you understand the material, how you are going to read, emphasize, etcetera. A full-stop mark (//) at the ends of sentences and a half-stop (/) for commas are appropriate. For stress or emphasis on a certain word underline it.

"Be neutral in newscasts. Being neutral doesn't mean that you don't give meaning. But, in the news you must be sincere but neutral at the same time.

"When it comes to drama, take a role and play it, live the part. The special-feature applies just as well. The drama is a story, real or imagined. The special-feature is a biography, etcetera, in the style of a play--dramatize, use sound effects, various voices, etcetera.

"Pronounce words correctly for the dialect or language which you

are using. For you ladies, "Mr. Bishlawy said, "you are to pronounce English with the standard British dialect. Pronounce your native Arabic names and words according to the Cairene Arabic dialect." And turning to me, Mr. Bishlawy said, "But for professor Drake, it is different. Professor Drake must pronounce his English with his General American dialect and do his utmost to get as close to Cairene Arabic as possible for Egyptian words in his newscasts." This matter of pronouncing English according to British or General American dialects is a confusing point with many announcers of English at the Broadcast Building in Cairo. While I was in Cairo, I found that while English was predominatly pronounced with degrees of British accent, more and more General American dialect was being used. (Anyone or anything American is popular right now.) Indeed, some of the ladies with whom I worked preferred the General American pronunciation because, they said, it sounded less affected. I might note here that I constantly carried to training sessions and later to work a copy of the NBC Handbook of Pronunciation.

During the third week, the training sessions were turned over to me entirely. And for the next three weeks of sometimes daily training sessions, I found a pattern of speaking English which applied to all of the ladies with whom I trained. In speaking English most Egyptians want to replace the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbol [ð] which represents the voiced fricative consonant sound heard in "the," "that," and "those," for the IPA symbol [z], the voiced silibant, fricative consonant sound heard in "Zambia," "zany," and "hose." (I had a Cairo University student tell me that her Egyptian teacher of English told her class that the "th" in English words was to at all times be sounded with a "z!") I found that the new announcers with whom I was working plus the old-timers who had

been on the air for years wanted to add the schwa, IPA symbol [ə], at the ends of many words and sentences. English announcers of English also have trouble with the IPA symbol [p] the voiceless, bilabial, plosive consonant found in "accompany," "Pacific," and, "popular." They want to replace the [p] with the IPA [b], the voice, bilabial, plosive consonant found in "behind," "ceiba," and "bat." (As my apartment in Zamalek was half a block from "Wimpy's," I would have to tell a taxi driver that I wanted to go to "Wimby's" in order for him to take me to the right place.) I also found that sometimes the IPA [g] would be closer to an IPA [k]. And much to my horror, the United States President's last name is always given the British and U.S. deep-south pronunciation of, "Cahtuh." (My "Carter" brought many smiles among some Egyptian colleagues.)

Announcer trainees had typical articulation and enunciation problems such as dropping some sounds, replacing some sounds with others and not hitting consonants.

According to our instructions from the head announcer and his superiors, in the training sessions we were to concentrate on reading news first. Our second priority was to develop voice flexibility and variety as much as possible. I found my trainees eager to try voice vaiety, if for no other reason than it allowed for a change of pace from the "neutral" approach to reading the news. I relied on my previous classes and coaching in the oral interpretation of literature to work with voice training. My students brought in passages from English literature which they particularly liked. I chose a short piece from a recent edition of the Reader's Digest which every-

one liked reading because of the author's use of color and pathos. In my training group we all seemed to enjoy a certain amount of camaraderie at once, plus getting in somedays of good, hard work in studio Twenty-Six. Some of the ladies found themselves doing on-the-air work before our training sessions were concluded. For all of us there finally came the time when we could move out of ptractice studio Twenty-Six and into the on-the-air studios.

All of us were required to sit-in on shifts with men and women who were old-hands at broadcasting for Radio Cairo. One evening I visited Selim Riskallah in studio Seven while he did his two-hour shift in English on a local frequency. Riskallah spent much of the first half-hour or so out of the studio after signing on his shift at seven o'clock. Later I found out why. It was Riskallah's habit on Monday nights to sign on radio with recorded programs and then hurry over to the television section and go on the air on one of the television channels at 7:15PM for a fifteen minute current events program. (Riskallah was the first person to announce the 1952 revolution over Radio Cairo in English. He was a mass communications advisor to Nasser and now assists president Sadat with speeches and translations in English.) Riskallah and I talked between his "live" radio shift assignments. "I am going to write a book, one day," Riskallah told me, "and it will be from a jounalistic point of view telling many things which I have seen and experienced since the 1952 revolution. But I must choose the proper time in which to write the book. Much material which I want to put

in the book is still sensitive and perhaps a little dangerous for me!" Riskallah did a marvelous job with the poorly-written newscast which he was handed one minute before it was due to be aired! I will never forget during the newscast Riskallah would push his cough-button and lean over to me and show me a page of news. "Look at this!" he said several times to me, "How is anyone supposed to read this!" But he did, with many pauses and on the air maintained perfect calm, the mark of the professional that he is!

Another night in studio Seven, I sat with Mrs. Soha who was luckier with her news script than Riskallah had been. She received her newscast less than five minutes before it was to be aired. Mrs. Soha was also doing a children's program on television in English, once a week in which she was, at the time I met her, running about twelve minutes of the original "Wizard of Oz." (Oh, to sit in our Cairo, Egypt apartment and watch twelve minutes of Judy Garland once a week along with the Tin Man, Scarecrow and Lion, sometimes brought a tear to the eye of this movie buff!)

When my performer's clearances came through the training sessions ceased and our recording sessions and "live" work began. It was fun to pass my trainees in the labyrinth of broadcast building hallways day and night on their way to different studios for various assignments as I was on the way to mine. I found out later that some of them requested me as their "partner in English" at some recording sessions. It seemed that everybody wanted an American voice for their various programs and I had to be careful that I wasn't putting in too many hours on the air.

I finally worked out a schedule where I worked three nights-

mornings each week and occasionally add an hour or two on some days to record features. My basic duties were to read the newscasts and commentaries plus occasional features for Radio Cairo's West African and European Services. We worked in teams, signing on the English language West African Service (transmitting on 19.51 meters at a frequency of 15375 kilohertz per second) at 10:30 in the evening and signing off at 12: o'clock midnight. Mr partner and I had fifteen minutes in which to take a break and move from studio Seven to studio Twelve. At 12:15 in the morning we would sign of for the English-language European Service (transmitting on 30.60 meters at a frequency of 9805 kilohertz per second) until 1:45 A.M.

I quickly adopted the habit of taking more than the allotted preparation time from 10: PM to 10:30 PM. In order to woodshed my scripts properly I needed more than half-an-hour's preparation. Several announcers of the various Services took their breaks and prepared their scripts in one of the radio lounges and this slowed me down considerably since there was always someone who wanted to talk with me in English. My females partners frequently chided me for wanting to spend too much time in script preparation. But, they were in the habit or reading their materials cold. And this is perhaps a major reason why so many announcers at Cairo Radio and Television read so poorly! Perhaps professional jealousy came into play here too. That is, it seemed to me that it was possible that some of the announcers who had been around for a while did not want someone new sounding too much better than they did! (Of course, this is common in the industry, no matter what country you are working in.)

When we went on the air we always had an engineer, none of whom understood or spoke English very well. This was not a problem for me for two reasons; (1) my partners spoke both Arabic and English and, (2) the cuing system we used transcended language. It is not the habit of Radio Cairo personnel to use hand signals in the studios. Instead, when the engineer (most of whom are female) was handing the mike to us she would press an interstudio communications system button. We would hear what was going out over the air from her studio monitor which sounded hollow. We in turn pushed our interstudio comm button when we were wrapping to give back to the engineer.

My female partners were basically responsible for the entire shift, doing the "live" sign-ons and sign-offs, seeing that recorded programs were available for the engineer, putting down times on and off and signing the program logs. In turn, I was in charge of going to the news and censor section on the seventh floor and picking up the news copy from the censors-writers.

From my point of view as a reader of news I found that my major problem was making short broadcast sentences out of complex-compound sentences and general newspaper style writing. The following is one such sentence from my February 14, 1979 newscast:

> Dr. Ghaly, who is currently visiting Belgium, said in a lecture he delivered in the Royal Institute for International Relations that ever since the start of negotiations between Egypt and Israel, the documents in concern always comprised two agreements, one between Egypt and Israel regarding Sinai and the other is concerned with the western bank and Gaza Strip.

Fortunately, I was permitted to make several short sentences from such long sentences.

Frequently there were grammatical errors and sometimes words

left out. I was allowed to make corrections as long as I did not change the meanings of sentences. (Scripts were turned in at the end of each shift and could be checked for any written modifications and, if necessary, the tapes in master radio control mentioned earlier could also be checked.) One evening I was delayed several minutes in marking a news story by a couple of words which appeared to me to be meaningless within the context of the sentence and story. Several of us pondered over this sentence:"...In the meantime chain cellar Bruna Kreisky affirmed the Palestinian right to establish a homeland..." Several people whose English was not too good were attempting to help me out with this sentence which looked all right to them! And I kept asking: "But what is a chain cellar?" And repeating: "There is no such thing in my language!" Finally, someone walked by, took a look and said: "The word is chancellor!" I was embarrassed that I hadn't figured it out! "Oh, think nothing of it!" said the person who had come to my rescue. "You must have the same translator that I have. Happens to me all the time. It's a bit scarry though when you don't get a script until just before you go on the air and then you come across something like that! You just go ahead and read it as it is!" Henceforth, I took my woodshedding far more seriously!

As is inevitable for any announcer the night finally arrived when I had a feature to read whose ending caused me to have to stifle (as Archie Bunker would say) myself. Even in prereading I had begun laughing and it carried over in my "live" presentation. I was reading "Talk Number Six: Feature's from Egypt's Phareonic and Islamic Civilization," written by Fathy Mustafa and translated

by Islah Metwally. I was finishing with the story of Snohy.

> Snohy was a favorite employee of the King. He narrates that at the king's death his son prince Snomarset who was on a military expedition to Libya returned quickly for assuming office. The story points out that another prince conspired with Snohy against Snomarset who could ascend the throne under the name of Snorset the First. As a result of the failure of the conspiracy Snohy escaped from Egypt for fear of the punishment of Snorset. After this the story describes Snohy's adventures, and his movement from one Country to another until he reached Syria and stayed in the palace of one of its princes, till he felt homesickness.

As I thought would happen with many of our listeners, I was so mesmerized by the names of the various Snowmen and the strange phrase order that I couldn't get the gist of this story! According to the previous "Talk Number Five," in the same series the listener was informed by me that the Egyptians had invented writing and the fiction form known as the novel. I was surprised at both of these pieces of information and was later informed by my teammate not to believe everything that I read over Radio Cairo!

The head announcer, Mr. Ibrahim Hassen, cautioned me constantly to read slowly. I soon found that I was reading far more slowly than my partners. I was taking more time on the commentaries and newscasts than alloted on the program logs. Hassen advised that my rate was all right and if necessary, I could dump the last few stories in order to get out of the newscast on time. But, the commentaries had to be read word for word and Hassen informed me that officials at the Broadcast Building liked the emphasis which I was giving in my reading. At this time it was only a few weeks before the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty and the commentaries were full of remarks against the Israelies and the American imperialists. I remember one night I was embarrassed by the remarks against the

United States in a commentary that I was reading. But, I continued along, full of emphases as though I were a died in the wool Arab!

While working at the Broadcast Building in Cairo I met many hardworking and talented people all of whom were kind and helpful toward me. Only one evening did one of my females partners all but accuse me of being a spy for the United States.

CAIRO RADIO GENERAL INFORMATION:

During one interview with the Understate Secretary for Foreign and Local Programs I received the following information about Radio Cairo.

Arabic is the main language for programming on Medium Wave-Length. Some hours of each broadcast day are simply normal Arabic broadcasting on Medium Wave. Afternoons and evenings Cairo Radio adds shortwave frequencies to be heard in Europe, North-Central-East-and-West Africa, Iraq, North and South America and the Arab Emirates. "We must furnish the Arabs the latest news about Egypt wherever in the world they are living," said the Undersecretary.

The Undersecretary went on to say that there are overseas programs in thirty-four different languages. He said there is even a program service in Hebrew directed especially to Israel. Likewise, there is a program from Tel Aviv beamed to Arabs. But, the Undersecretary said, a problem with the Israelis broadcasting to the Arab world is that there are too many Arab dialects and much of their broadcasting is really not understood, as an example in Tunisia.

Two mentalities obtain in Israel, according to the Undersecretary: (1) those urbane Jews from Europe and, (2) those Jews of the Orient, Palestine and the Mid-East in general. Radio Cairo must

attempt to serve the needs of both orientations. It is comparatively easy for Radio Cairo to broadcast in Hebrew to the Israelis, multiple dialects do not pose a problem.

Arabic is now being taught by Cairo Radio in English and French. (One such program was on my English shift to West Africa.) There are home listeners in 81 different countries all over the world. The Cairo Radio Service is putting together printed books and materials to be sent postage-free to the listeners in various countries who are trying to learn Arabic. Cairo Radio has a file on each listener who writes in. When I was working at Cairo Radio plans were underway to teach Arabic by radio through other languages such as Swahili.

During the day many guards and "goffers" are stationed throughout the hallways in the Cairo Broadcast Building. One cannot walk more than a few yards down any hallway without encountering men sitting in chairs or standing by doors and stationed at desks near stairways and elevators. At night there are far fewer guards in civilian clothes on duty, most of whom are centered around the Corniche El Nil main entrance. I have been at the Broadcast Building in the middle of the night to see the military guard changed. The guards are at their posts around the clock--on a side street a few yards down from the Broadcast Building is a van where soldiers sleep between their guard duty. Security is strong at the Broadcast Building and for obvious reasons. The Broadcast Building is one of the first locations to be taken over by members of an internal coup or external military group. With the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel there is word out of anticipated terrorism in

Cairo--two such examples are the bombs which went off at the beginning of 1979 at the Sheraton Hotel and another in the Spring of 1979 at a downtown postoffice in Cairo. My mail was being bomb-inspected shortly before I left Cairo. The point is, one can readily understand the stringent security measures at Cairo's Broadcast Building. A stranger can certainly be intimidated when walking through the maze of hallways in the Broadcast Building.

The Broadcast Building is so large that several Egyptians with whom I spoke said that they did not know how to get to certain offices or studios. Fortunately, one of the first and easiest things for me to do upon my arrival in Cairo was to pick up the numerical symbols used by the Egyptians. Those symbols, by the way, are <u>not</u> Arabic as Western numerals are known to be Arabic! The largeness of the building aids in security.

I have to admit that security did not allow me to do what I normally do when working in broadcast studios. As a foreigner on the air I could not take a cassette audio recorder into the building in order to do my own voice checks. But at one point, and in a rather circuitous manner, I was able to get an audio copy of some of my on the air work.

In teaching, as well as my work in the Broadcast Building, I found that Egyptians do not take negative criticism easily, no matter how well couched in diplomacy it may be. Comments by a foreigner are especially difficult for some Egyptians, as I found out when asked to write critiques of each shift on which I worked. After the first week of turning in such critiques I found that I was endangering the working conditions around me and so afterwards begged off doing such reports.

As a newsman I am actuality oriented. My radio newscasts were devoid of any actualities and this is where I felt that the radio news department was falling down on the job. I asked about this one day and was told that to have such insertsin newscasts was not feasible for Cairo Radio due to time, personnel and equipment.

I found that another unique feature of broadcasting in Cairo--short-wave as well as domestic--was radio and television sign-ons and sign-offs which included chants from the Koran. Domestic services are interrupted by the calls to prayer which occur five times daily. (One day I turned a corner by a stairway on a level between the first and second floors at the front of the Broadcast Building and was surprised to see a little prayer area for the devout.) Traditional religion takes up a considerable amount of radio and television programming daily in Cairo. And it appears to be one of the easiest and least expensive types of programming to produce.

CONCLUSION:

I found that Cairo procedures are not all that different from broadcasting by professional radio stations in the United States. The traditional differences are the decentralized and commercial broadcasting of the United States as opposed to the basically centralized European and non-commercial approach in Egypt. (Both television channels in Cairo contain some advertising but not as we know of it in the United States; on one channel twenty-minutes of commercials are piggybacked just before the late night movie while no commercials had been run for the previous three hours! Domestic radio frequencies also carry some commercials. I was told that commercialism in both radio and television in Egypt would be increasing as time went along.

When I left Cairo there were plans for a third and entirely commercial cable television channel to go on the air, hopefully by the end of 1979. This new channel will allegedly be separate from tight government controls and will be a joint commercial venture on the part of United States and Egyptian business people.)

Another outstanding difference between United States and Egyptian broadcasting procedures is the amount of military personnel on hand in the Broadcast Building in Cairo plus the constant references to government script censorship.

One day the head of the North and South American programming, Mr. Ezz El Dine Metwally, told me what he thought are two current major problems existing in the Egyptian broadcasting service. First, Metwally said that too many "good" broadcast personnel--especially technicians-had gone to other countries which pay better salaries, such as Saudi Arabia. Second--and perhaps a result of the first problem--there are too many men and women working at the Broadcast Building who know little or nothing about broadcasting. But because they are university graduates these people are assigned guaranteed jobs in broadcasting by the government. (The Egyptian government places university graduates in jobs for a minimum of eighteen months and these jobs often become permanent.)

In connection with the two above major problems, it is Metwally's idea that frequently scripts are being produced which are less than desirable because of poor translation and poor writing. For instance, newspaper and magazine people all too often are the writers for broadcast news.

I had noticed a preponderance of females on radio and television. Some of those women with whom I came in contact seemed to be basically Moslum housewives. Metwally verified that this is indeed the case and at present there is nothing much that can be done about this situation. Generally, men will not work for the low salaries which the women accept. Also, many of the young women on television, especially those who announce between programs, are nothing more than models and aspiring movie starlets who are simply seeking exposure in hopes that they will be offered contracts by movie producers and directors who see them on the tube. (Most of these attractive young ladies are hardly audible and barely open their mouths when announcing! Some of my mass communications students at the American University and Cairo University said that many of these ladies cannot even be understood by Egyptian listeners and viewers.)

According to my experiences and what some officials at the Broadcast Building told me in privacy, there is a need for raising the professional standards of technicians and on-the-air personnel. The preponderance of housewives on-the-air and those who never intended to work in broadcasting in the first place have contributed to the current low professional standards at the Broadcast Building in Cairo. Governmental bureaucracy is also a contributing factor. There are a few individuals who are exceptions, some of whom I believe I met and worked with. According to an Egyptian Gazette article just before I left Cairo, France is due to give a considerable amount of aid in the form of money and personnel to advise the Egyptian broadcasting service.

Private and foreign individuals, such as myself, with experience

and degrees in speech communication and mass communication are currently being sought by the Egyptian government. In my opinion, the Egyptian government broadcast service is an excellent opportunity for recent university graduates who are interested in international broadcasting, if you can get in. Egypt is an exciting country to work in for the speech communication/mass communication comprehensivist. As an example, before I left Cairo I was offered work in: (1) radio and television as an on-the-air newsman; (2) a radio and television script writer; (3) a part-time editor and advisor to a daily English-language newspaper; (4) a magazine writer; (5) and, voice-over for Egyptian government English-language tourist films for worldwide distribution. I was also interested in becoming involved in the government-run cinema, which, at last count, was producing fifty full-length films each year.

There is one thing which you should know before you catch the next plane to Cairo. Salaries are low, especially compared to our western media standards. This is why many media people in Cairo must have more than one job!

I feel privileged to have been able to work in the Egyptian government's broadcast facility during my Fulbright tenure in Cairo. Essentially, I derived what I had sought from my broadcasting experiences: an inside understanding of some of the broadcasting procedures in Egypt, knowledge which I could not have acquired simply by interviewing.